

## **Mountain of discarded mobiles grows at 'frightening' rate**

By Nic Fildes

Flashy new mobile phones like the iPhone and other must-have electronic gadgets, such as the latest laptops and iPod models, will fill many stockings this Christmas. But disposing of the older devices will not be at the forefront of most people's minds.

Around 11,000 tons of unused phones already sit dormant in homes across the UK, and that figure is likely to rise this Christmas as people upgrade to better devices. Most of the old laptops, games consoles and portable music players will end up in sites, leaking dangerous chemicals into the earth.

While reusing the devices either by passing them on to friends or selling it is the best solution, recycling the gadget is the next best thing. Companies such as the Body Shop and mobile phone operators such as Orange have been offering to recycle handsets for years, but UK consumers are still much more likely to throw away their old phone as soon as they have transferred their numbers.

Johan Thomsen, a manager at Green Mobile (a small operator that passes on a portion of its profits to environmental charities), argued: "The problem today is that people upgrade their mobile phones every year and only a small percentage of these phones are disposed of safely. The situation is frightening, a handset is designed to last five years, yet 100 million people in Europe upgrade to a new phone every year."

For used mobile phones, laptops and iPods, recycling is the best way to reduce the environmental impact of the product. EU legislation requires that hardware companies that produce electronic products are also responsible for disposing of the device. So, manufacturers are designing phones that are easily recyclable and contain less hazardous chemicals.

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